

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 080540Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4354
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMCONSUL DJIBOUTI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3580

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR
SUBJ: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ADDIS ABABA-DJIBOUTI RAILROAD
ATTACK

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 3524, B. ADDIS ABABA 3259, C. MOGADISCIO 0917

SUMMARY: RECENT SABOTAGE OF ADDIS-DJIBOUTI RAILROAD HAS NO-
TICEABLY HEIGHTENED TENSIONS BETWEEN EPMG AND GSDR. WHILE
EPMG STATEMENT ON ATTACK HIGHLIGHTS IMPACTS OF SABOTAGE ON
DJIBOUTI, EMBASSY BELIEVES PRIMARY PURPOSES OF ATTACKS TO
HEIGHTEN EPMG'S PROBLEMS IN SOUTHEASTERN ETHIOPIA, INCREASE
PRESSURE ON EPMG MILITARY, AND DECREASE EPMG ECONOMIC LEVERAGE
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ON DJIBOUTI. IMPACT OF SABOTAGE ON EPMG MILITARY IMPORTS WILL
BE MINIMAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPACT WILL DEPEND ON LENGTH OF TIME
RAILROAD OUT OF SERVICE. END SUMMARY.

1. EPMG STATEMENT (REF A) ON SABOTAGE OF ADDIS-
DJIBOUTI RAILROAD BY SOMALI-TRAINED AND ARMED INFIL-
TRATORS IS SIGNIFICANT IN THAT IT VASTLY INCREASES

DIFFICULTIES OF SOVIET EFFORT TO PROMOTE "DETENTE" BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA. WHILE EPMG HAS HERETOFORE QUIETLY TOLERATED GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES OF SOMALI-BACKED INFILTRATORS, EPMG OBVIOUSLY CANNOT IGNORE THREAT TO DIRE DAWA AND HARAR, EFFORT TO ISOLATE OGADEN, AND CUTTING OF MAJOR COMMUNICATIONS ARTERY.

2. ALTHOUGH EPMG STATEMENT CAREFULLY SLANTED TO GIVE IMPRESSION THAT ACTS IT ATTRIBUTES TO GSDR INTENDED TO ISOLATE DJIBOUTI, EMBASSY IMPRESSION IS SABOTAGE OF RAILWAY INTENDED PRIMARILY TO AGGRAVATE EPMG'S LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS IN SOUTHEASTERN ETHIOPIA, AND IMPACTS RE DJIBOUTI SECONDARY TO MAIN INSURGENT INTENT. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE GSDR UNWILLING MAKE HOSTILE MOVE AGAINST TFAI GIVEN FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE AND GSDR OPINION TFAI WILL EVENTUALLY FALL INTO ITS HANDS. ATTACK ON RAILROAD SHOULD BE SEEN AS: (A) DIRECT REACTION TO USSR ARMS SHIPMENT TO ETHIOPIA; (B) ATTEMPT TO ISOLATE FURTHER DIRE DAW/HARAR AREA AND OGADEN; (C) ATTEMPT TO INCREASE PRESSURES ON EPMG ARMED FORCES WHICH PRESENTLY CONCENTRATED IN NORTH; (D) ATTEMPT TO DECREASE EPMG'S ECONOMIC LEVERAGE ON DJIBOUTI; AND (E) DIRECT PROVOCATION OF EPMG BY FORCES FRIENDLY TO GSDR, PERHAPS EVEN AT GSDR INSTIGATION.

3. GSDR-INSPIRED MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SOMALI-INHABITED AREAS OF ETHIOPIA HAS BEEN ON UPSWING SINCE LAST AUTUMN. SINCE THAT TIME, TROOP TRANSFERS FROM SOUTH TO ERITREA HAVE REDUCED EPMG MILITARY CAPABILITY. EM-CONFIDENTIAL

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BASSY BELIEVES MAJORITY EPMG FORCES IN OGADEN PRESENTLY CONFINED TO STATIC DEFENSE POSITIONS AND EPMG CONTROL OF OGADEN GENERALLY LIMITED TO THESE GARRISONS. WELL-INFORMED SOURCE STATED JIJIGA AGAIN CUT OFF FROM HARAR AND THAT GARRISON AT GODE HAS REQUESTED TO BE EVACUATED OR REINFORCED BY 3,000 TROOPS. ETHIOPIAN PRESS ALSO CONTINUE TO REPORT HIGH-LEVEL OF ANTI-GOVT ACTIVITIES IN BALE, SIDAMO AND ARSSI PROVINCES. ATTACK ON RAILROAD COUPLED WITH REPORTED ATTACKS IN DIRE DAWA ON CEMENT FACTORY, TOTAL POL STORAGE (CONFIRMED) AND PRISON.

4. IN VIEW PENDING EPMG MILITIA CAMPAIGN, POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT ERITREANS MAY HAVE REQUESTED INCREASE IN ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH TO REDUCE EPMG PRESSURES IN NORTH. SUCH ACTIVITY, WITH TACIT APPROVAL OF GSDR, WOULD NO DOUBT BE WELL RECEIVED BY SUPPORTERS OF ERITREAN SECESSION, WOULD GENERALLY SERVE GSDR'S INTERESTS, AND WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH MOST RECENT STATEMENTS BY GSDR

(MOGADISCIO 0917).

5. CUTTING OF RAILROAD WILL HAVE STRONGEST IMPACT ON ETHIOPIA-TFAI ECONOMIC TIES. GSDR NO DOUBT WILLING TO ALLEVIATE LOSS OF FOOD SHIPMENTS TO DJIBOUTI TO SOME EXTENT, AS OCCURRED IN DECEMBER WHEN TRUCK-LOADS FOOD SENT TO DJIBOUTI DURING EPMG CUTBACK. RELIABLE SOMALI SOURCE HERE HAS ALREADY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOMALIA AND NEARBY ARAB COUNTRIES PREPARED TO SUPPLY DJIBOUTI'S GROCERY AND REVENUE NEEDS AS MEANS REDUCING DJIBOUTI'S DEPENDENCE ON ETHIOPIA. IN-DEFINITE CLOSING OF RAILROAD, WHICH RELATIVELY SIMPLE MILITARY MATTER IN VIEW TERRAIN AND MILITARY BALANCE IN AREA, COULD FORCE TFAI LEADERSHIP TO RELY ON SAUDIS, FRENCH AND OTHERS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WHICH, OF COURSE, WILL HAVE POLITICAL PRICE. FACT REMAINS IF INSURGENTS CAN CONTROL ADDIS-DJIBOUTI RAILROAD FROM
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POINTS OUTSIDE TFAI (AND THUS CONTROL ETHIOPIAN-DJIBOUTI ECONOMIC LINKS), GSDR WOULD INDIRECTLY HAVE TRUMPED ETHIOPIA'S BEST CARD IN STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE OVER TFAI.

6. CUTTING OF RAILROAD WILL HAVE LITTLE IMPACT ON ARMS SHIPMENTS TO ETHIOPIA, MAJORITY OF WHICH ARRIVE THROUGH ASSAB. ATTACKS MAY HAVE OPPOSITE EFFECT IF SOVIETS PREPARED TO SPEED UP DELIVERIES IN RESPONSE TO INCREASED THREAT. EVEN SO, EVENTS IN HARRARGHE PROVINCE HAVE HARDLY EASED SOVIETS' PROBLEM IN MAINTAINING PRESENT LINKS WITH BOTH EPMG AND GSDR.
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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770203-1192
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From: ADDIS ABABA
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